

# NORTH OF FIFTY-THREE

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

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## CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"Anyway, here it is: You got the essentials, up to a certain point, from Brooks. But he didn't tell it all—his kind never does, not by a long shot. They, the four of them, it seems, held a meeting as soon as I shipped out that gold and put through that stock-selling scheme. That was legitimate. I couldn't restrain them from that, being a hopeless minority of one. Their chief object, however, was to let two or three friends in on the ground floor of a good thing; also, they wanted each a good bundle of that stock while it was cheap—figuring that with the prospects I had opened up it would sell high. So they had it on the market, and in addition had everything framed up to reorganize with a capitalization of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This all cut and dried before I got there. Now, as it originally stood, the five of us would each have made a small fortune on these Klappan claims. They're good. But with a quarter of a million in outstanding stock—well, it would be all right for the fellow with a big block. But you can see where I would get off with a five-thousand-dollar interest. To be sure, a certain proportion of the money derived from the sale of this stock should be mine. But it goes into the treasury, and they had it arranged to keep it in the treasury, as a fund for operations, with them doing the operating. They had already indicated their bent by voting an annual stipend of ten thousand and six thousand dollars to Lorimer and Brooks as president and secretary respectively. Me, they proposed to quiet with a manager's wage of a mere five thousand a year—after I got on the ground and began to get my back up.

"But they capped the climax with what I must cold-bloodedly characterize as the baldest attempt at a dirty fraud I ever encountered. And they had the gall to try and make me a party to it. To make this clear you must understand that I, on behalf of the company and acting as the company's agent, grubstaked Whitney Lewis and four others to go in and stake those claims. I was empowered to arrange with these five men that if the claims made a decent showing each should receive five thousand dollars in stock for assigning their claims to the company, and should have employment at top wages while the claims were operated.

"They surely earned it. You know what the North is in the dead of winter. They bucked their way through a hell of frost and snow and staked the claims. If ever men were entitled to what was due them, they were. And not one of them stuttered over



"That Was When I Smashed Him."

his bargain, even though they were taking out weekly as much gold as they were to get for their full share. They'd given their word, and they were white men. They took me for a white man also. They took my word that they would get what was coming to them, and gave me in the company's name clear title to every claim. I put those titles on record in Hazelton, and came home.

"Lorimer and Brooks deliberately proposed to withhold that stock, to defraud these men, to steal—oh, I can't find words strong enough. Brooks said to me, with a grin: 'The property's in the company's name—let the roughnecks sweat a while. They've got no come-back, anyway.'

"That was when I smashed him. Do you blame me? I'd taken over those fellows' claims in good faith. Could I go back there and face those men and say: 'Boys, the company's got your claims, and they won't pay for them.' Do you think for a minute I'd let a bunch of lily-fingered crooks put anything like that over on simple, square-dealing fellows who were too honest to protect their own interests from sharp practice? A quartette of soft-boiled mongrels who sat in upholstered office chairs while these others wallowed through six feet of snow for three weeks, living on bacon and beans, to grab a pot of gold for them! I make my fist double up when I think about it.

"And I wouldn't be put off or placated by a chance to fatten my own bank roll. I didn't care if I broke the Free Gold Mining company and myself likewise. A dollar doesn't terrify nor yet fascinate me—I hope it never will. And while, perhaps, it was not what they would call good form for me to lose my temper and go at them with my fists, I was fighting mad when I thoroughly sensed their dirty project. Anyway, it helped bring them to time. When you take a man of that type and cuff him around with your two hands he's apt to listen serious to what you say. And they listened when I told them in dead earnest next day that Whitney Lewis and his partners must have what was due them, or I'd wreck the bunch of them if it took ten years and every dollar I had to do it. And I could have put them on the tramp, too—they'd already dipped their fingers in where they couldn't stand litigation. I'm sure of that—or they would never have come through; which they did.

"But I'm sorry I ever got mixed up with them. I'm going to sell my stock and advise Lewis and the others to do the same while we can get full value for it. Lorimer and that bunch will manipulate the outfit to death, no matter how the mine produces.

"That's all of that. I don't care two whoops about the money. There is still gold in the Klappan Range and other corners of the North, whenever I need it. But it nauseated me. I can't stand that cut-throat game. And Granville, like most other cities of its kind, lives by and for that sort of thing. The pressure of modern life makes it inevitable. Anyway, a town is no place for me. I can stomach it about so long, and no longer. It's too cramped, too girded about with petty-larceny conventions. If once you slip and get down, every one walks on you. Everything's restricted, priced, tinkered with. There is no real freedom of body or spirit. I wouldn't trade a comfy log cabin in the woods with a big fireplace and a shelf of books for the finest home on Maple drive—not if I had to stay there and stifle in the dust and smoke and smells. That would be a sordid and impoverished existence. I cannot live by the dog-eat-dog code that seems to prevail wherever folk get jammed together in an unwholesome social mass. I have said the like to you before.

"By nature and training I'm unfitted to live in these crowded places. I love you, little person, I don't think you realize how much, but I can't make you happy by making myself utterly miserable. That would only produce the inevitable reaction. But I still think you are essentially enough like me to meet me on common ground. You loved me and you found contentment and joy at our little cabin once. Don't you think it might be waiting there again?

"If you really care, if I and the old North still mean anything to you, a few days or weeks, or even months of separation won't matter. An affection that can't survive six months is too fragile to go through life on. I don't ask you to jump the next train and follow me. I don't ask you to wire me, 'Come back, Bill.' Though I would come quick enough if you called me. I merely want you to think it over soberly and let your heart decide. You know where I stand, don't you, Hazel, dear? I haven't changed—not a bit—I'm the same old Bill. But I'd rather hit the trail alone than with an unwilling partner. Don't flounder about in any quicksand of duty. There is no 'I ought to' between us.

"So it is up to you once more, little person. If my way is not your way I will abide by your decision without whining. And whenever you want to reach me, a message to Felix Courvoisier, Fort George, will eventually find me. I'll fix it that way.

"So long, little person. I like you a heap, for all your cantankerous ways.

"BILL."

She laid aside the letter, with a lump in her throat. For a brief instant she was minded to telegraph the word that would bring him hurrying back. But—some of the truths he had set down in cold black and white cut her deep. Of a surety she had drawn her weapon on the wrong side in the mining trouble. Overhasty?—yes. And shamefully disloyal. Perhaps there was something in it, after all; that is to say, it might be they had made a mistake. She saw plainly enough that unless she could get back some of the old enthusiasm for that wilderness life, unless the fascination of magnificent distances, of silent, breathless forests, of contented, quiet days on trail and stream, could lay fast hold of her again, they would only defer the day of reckoning, as Bill had said.

No, she would not attempt to call him back. She doubted if he would come. And she would not go—not yet. She must have time to think.

Altogether, as the first impression of Bill's letter grew less vivid to her she considered her grievances more. And she was minded to act as she had set out to do—to live her life as seemed best to her, rather than pocket her pride and rejoice in Bill. The feminine instinct to compel the man to capitulate

late asserted itself more and more strongly.

A month passed. During that thirty-day period she received a brief note from Bill. Just a few lines to say:

"Hit the ranch yesterday, little person. Looks good to me. Went fishing last night about sundown. Trout were rising fine. Nailed a ten-pounder. Woke up this morning at daylight and found a buck deer with two lady friends standing in the middle of the clearing. I loafed a few days in Fort George, sort of thinking I might hear from you. Am sending this out by Jake. Will start for the Klappan about day after tomorrow."

She had not answered his first letter. She had tried to. But somehow when she tried to set pen to paper the right words would not come. She lacked his facility of expression. There was so much she wanted to say, so little she seemed able to say. As the days passed she felt less sure of her ground, less sure that she had not sacrificed something precious to a vagary of self, an obsession of her own ego.

And slowly but surely she began to view all the activities of her circle with a critical eye. Certain of her friends had become tentative enemies. Kitty Brooks and the Bray womenfolk, who were a numerous and influential tribe, were not only turned silent faces when they met, but they made war on her in the peculiar fashion of women. A word here, a suggestive phrase there, a shrug of the shoulders. It all bore fruit. Other friends conveyed the avid gossip. Hazel smiled and ignored it. But in her own rooms she raged unavailingly.

Her husband had left her. There was a man in the case. They had lost everything. The first count was sufficiently maddening because it was a half truth. And any of it was irritating—even if few believed—since it made a choice morsel to digest in gossip corners, and brought sundry curious stares on Hazel at certain times. Also Mr. Wagstaff had caused the stockholders of Free Gold a heavy loss—which was only offset by the fact that the Free Gold properties were producing richly. None of this was even openly flung at her. She gathered it piecemeal. And it galled her. She could not openly defend either Bill or herself against the shadowy scandal-mongers.

Slowly it dawned upon her, with a bitterness born of her former experience with Granville, that she had lost something of the standing that certain circles had accorded her as the wife of a successful mining man. It made her ponder. Was Bill so far wrong, after all, in his estimate of them? It was a disheartening conclusion. She had come of a family that stood well in Granville; she had grown up there; if lifetime friends blew hot and cold like that, was the game worth playing?

In so far as she could she gave the lie to some of the petty gossip. Whereas at first she had looked dubiously on spending Bill's money to maintain the standard of living they had set up, she now welcomed that deposit of five thousand dollars as a means to demonstrate that even in his absence he stood behind her financially—which she began to perceive counted more than anything else. So long as she could dress in the best, while she could ride where others walked, so long as she betrayed no limitation of resources, the doors stood wide. Not what you are, but what you've got—she remembered Bill saying that was their holiest creed.

It repelled her. And sometimes she was tempted to sit down and pour it all out in a letter to him. But she could not quite bring herself to the point. Always behind Bill loomed the vast and dreary Northland, and she shrank from that.

On top of this, she began to suffer a queer upset of her physical condition. All her life she had been splendidly healthy; her body a perfect-working machine, afflicted with no weaknesses. Now odd spasmodic pains recurred without rhyme or reason in her head, her back, her limbs, striking her with sudden poignancy, disappearing as suddenly.

She was stretched on the lounge one afternoon wrestling nervously with a particularly acute attack, when Vesta Lorimer was ushered in.

"You're almost a stranger," Hazel remarked, after the first greetings. "Your outing must have been pleasant, to hold you so long."

"It would have held me longer," Vesta returned. "If I didn't have to be in touch with my market. I could live quite happily on my island eight months in the year. But one can't get people to come several hundred miles to a sitting. And I feel inclined to acquire a living income while my vogue lasts."

"You're rather a wilderness lover, aren't you?" Hazel commented. "I don't think you'd love it as dearly if you were buried alive in it."

"That would all depend on the circumstances," Vesta replied. "One escapes many disheartening things in a country that is still comparatively primitive. The continual grind of

keeping one's end up in town gets terribly wearisome. I'm always glad to go to the woods, and sorry when I have to leave. But I suppose it's largely in one's point of view."

They chatted of sundry matters for a few minutes.

"By the way, is there any truth in the statement that this Free Gold row has created trouble between you and your husband?" Vesta asked abruptly. "I dare say it's quite an impertinent question, and you'd be well within your rights to tell me it's none of my business. But I should like to confound some of these petty tattlers. I haven't been home forty-eight hours;



"You're Almost a Stranger," Hazel Remarked, After the First Greetings.

yet I've heard tongues wagging. I hope there's nothing in it. I warned Mr. Wagstaff against Paul."

"Warned him? Why?" Hazel neglected the question entirely. The bluntness of it took her by surprise. Frank speech was not a characteristic of Vesta Lorimer's set.

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "He is my brother, but that doesn't veil my eyes," she said coolly. "Paul is too crooked to lie straight in bed. I'm glad Mr. Wagstaff brought the lot of them up with a round turn—which he seems to have done. If he had used a club instead of his fists it would have been only their deserts. I suppose the fuss quite upset you?"

"It did," Hazel admitted grudgingly. "It did more than upset me."

"I thought as much," Vesta said slowly. "It made you inflict an undeserved hurt on a man who should have had better treatment at your hands; not only because he loves you, but because he is one of the few men who deserve the best that you or any woman can give."

"You've said quite enough," Hazel cried. "If you have any more insults, please get rid of them elsewhere. I think you are—"

"Oh, I don't care what you think of me," the girl interrupted recklessly. "If I did I wouldn't be here. I'd hide behind the conventional rules of the game and let you blunder along. But I can't. I'm not gifted with your blind egotism. Whatever you are, that Bill of yours loves you, and if you care anything for him, you should be with him. I would, if I were lucky enough to stand in your shoes. I'd go with him down into hell itself gladly if he wanted me to!"

"Oh!" Hazel gasped. "Are you clean mad?"

"Shocked to death, aren't you?" Vesta flared. "You can't understand, can you? I love him—yes. I'm not ashamed to own it. I'm no sentimental prude to throw up my hands in horror at a perfectly natural emotion. But he is not for me. I dare say I couldn't give him an added heartbeat if I tried. And I have a little too much pride—strange as it may seem to you—to try, so long as he is chained hand and foot to your chariot. But you're making him suffer. And I care enough to want him to live all his days happily. He is a man, and there are so few of them, real men. If you can make him happy, I'd compel you to do so, if I had the power. You couldn't understand that kind of a love. Oh, I could choke you for your stupid disloyalty. I could do almost anything that would spur you to action. I can't rid myself of the hopeless, reckless mood he is in. There are so few of his kind, the patient, strong, loyal, square-dealing men, with a woman's tenderness and a lion's courage. Any woman should be proud and glad to be his mate, to mother his children. And you—"

She threw out her hands with a sudden, despairing gesture. The blue eyes grew misty, and she hid her face in her palms. Before that passionate outburst Hazel sat dumbly amazed, staring, uncertain. In a second Vesta lifted her head defiantly.

"I had no notion of breaking out like this when I came up," she said quietly. "I was going to be very adroit. I intended to give you a friendly boost along the right road, if I could. But it has all been bubbling inside me for a long time. You perhaps think it very unwomanly—but I don't care much what you think. My little heartache is incidental, one of the things life

deals us whether we will or not. But if you care in the least for your husband, for God's sake make some effort, some sacrifice of your own petty little desires, to make his road a little pleasanter, a little less gray than it must be now. You'll be well repaid—if you are the kind that must always be paid in full. Don't be a stiff-necked idiot. That's all I wanted to say. Goodbye!"

She was at the door when she finished. The click of the closing catch stirred Hazel to speech and action.

"Vesta, Vesta!" she cried, and ran out into the corridor.

But Vesta Lorimer neither heeded nor halted. And Hazel went back to her room, quivering. Sometimes the truth is bitter and stirs to wrath. And mingled with other emotions was a dull pang of jealousy—the first she had ever known. For Vesta Lorimer was beautiful beyond most women; and she had but given ample evidence of the bliss of her soul. With shamed tears creeping to her eyes, Hazel wondered if she could love even Bill so intensely that she would drive another woman to his arms that he might win happiness.

But one thing stood out clear above that painful meeting. She was done fighting against the blankness that seemed to surround her since Bill went away. Slowly but steadily it had been forced upon her that much which she deemed desirable, even necessary, was of little weight in the balance with him. Day and night she longed for him, for his cheery voice, the whimsical good humor of him, his kiss and his smile. Indubitably Vesta Lorimer was right to term her a stiff-necked, selfish fool. But if all folk were saturated with the essence of wisdom—well, there was but one thing to be done. Silly pride had to go by the board. If to face gayly a land she dreaded were the price of easing his heartache—and her own—that price she would pay, and pay with a grace but lately learned.

She lay down on the lounge again. The old pains were back. And as she endured, a sudden startling thought flashed across her mind. A possibility?—yes. She hurried to dress, wondering why it had not before occurred to her, and, phoning up a taxi, rolled downtown to the office of Doctor Hart. An hour or so later she returned. A picture of her man stood on the mantel. She took it down and stared at it with a tremulous smile.

"Oh, Billy-boy, Billy-boy, I wish you knew," she whispered. "But I was coming, anyway, Bill!"

That evening, stirring about her preparations for the journey, she paused, and wondered why, for the first time since Bill left, she felt so utterly at peace.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Home Again.

Twelve months works many a change on a changing frontier. Hazel found this so. When she came to plan her route she found the G. T. P. bridging the last gap in a transcontinental system, its trains westbound already within striking distance of Fort George. She could board a sleeping car at Granville and detrain within a hundred miles of the ancient trading post—with a fast river boat to carry her the remaining distance.

Fort George loomed up a jumbled area of houses and tents, log buildings, frame structures yellow in their newness, strangers to paint as yet. On every hand others stood in varying



His Round Face Lit Up With a Smile of Recognition.

stages of erection. Folks hurried about the sturdy beginning of a future greatness. And as she left the boat and followed a paw-laid walk of planks toward a hotel, Jake Lauer stepped out of a store, squarely into her path.

His round face lit up with a smile of recognition. And Hazel, fresh from the long and lonesome journey, was equally glad to set eyes on a familiar, a genuinely friendly face.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Sound reason is given to few, but those few exert influence.



## It's Poor Economy to Endure a Bad Back

In these days of rising prices, we need every ounce of strength and the ability to do a full day's work every day. The man or woman with weak kidneys is half crippled. Sore, aching kidneys; lame, stiff back, headache, dizzy spells and a dull, tired feeling and urinary disorders are daily sources of distress. You can't afford to neglect kidney weakness and make it easy for gravel, dropsy or Bright's disease to take you. Get a box of Doan's Kidney Pills today. They have helped thousands. They should help you.

### Personal Reports of Real Cases

**AN ILLINOIS CASE.**  
Geo. Mahurin, 125 Main St., Canton, Ill., says: "I used to have sharp pains across my back just over my kidneys. Many times I was laid up for three or four days at a time. I couldn't get around to do anything. My kidneys were in a weak and diseased condition and I was obliged to get up several times at night. Every little move sent sharp pains through my back and kidneys. Nothing brought me more than temporary relief until I began using Doan's Kidney Pills. They soon helped me and after I had taken six boxes the trouble disappeared. Since then I have never been bothered with my kidneys, which speaks well for Doan's."

**AN IOWA CASE.**  
Mrs. Henry Witt, 8th and Michigan Sts., Storm Lake, Iowa, says: "Kidney complaint came on me and undermined my health with a distressing pain and weakness. The kidney secretions gave me no end of trouble, my limbs swelled and there were puffy sacs under my eyes. Others of my family had been benefited by Doan's Kidney Pills and I used them. They relieved me from the first and soon restored me to good health. Since then my kidneys have given me very little trouble. I can't praise Doan's enough."

## DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS

60c a Box At All Stores. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y., Chemists

**Cruel Comment.**  
"My wife was stung on that last bone-net she got." "No wonder; she's always got a bee in it."

**Alias Slacker.**  
"Pa, what is a pacifist?" "A pacifist, my son, is a bachelor who's afraid to get married."

**His Species.**  
"What a mean-looking fellow. I bet he's a bird." "Yes, he's a stool pigeon."

**Just Missed It.**  
"Did your son get his degree?" "No; the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter."

**Excessive politeness is seldom on speaking terms with truth.**

## Both Ends (Producer and Consumer) Against The Middle (The Packer)

The consumer wants to pay a low price for meat.

The farmer wants to get a high price for cattle.

The packer stands between these conflicting demands, and finds it impossible to completely satisfy both.

The packer has no control over the prices of live stock or meat, and the most that can be expected of him is that he keep the difference between the two as low as possible. He does this successfully by converting animals into meat and distributing the meat at a minimum of expense, and at a profit too small to be noticeable in the farmer's returns for live stock or in the meat bill of the consumer.

Swift & Company's 1917 transactions in Cattle were as follows:

	Average Per Head
Sold Meat to Retailer for . . .	\$68.97
Sold By-products for . . .	24.09
Total Receipts . . .	93.06
Paid to Cattle Raiser . . .	84.45
Balance (not paid to Cattle Raiser) . . .	8.61
Paid for labor and expenses at Packing House, Freight on Meat, and Cost of operating Branch distributing houses . . .	7.32
Remaining in Packer's hands as Returns on investment . . .	\$ 1.29

The net profit was \$1.29 per head, or about one-fourth of a cent per pound of beef.

By what other method can the difference between cattle prices and beef prices be made smaller, and how can the conflicting demands of producer and consumer be better satisfied?

1918 Year Book of interesting and instructive facts sent on request. Address Swift & Company, Union Stock Yards, Chicago, Illinois

Swift & Company, U.S.A.